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Spirituality Redefined

This article is a compilation of several sermons by Wolfgang edited into an article by John Mullen.

There are days where I have truly felt *unspiritual*, or just not as spiritual as others. There were no major revelations from my devotions, my head slowly nodding downwards coming to harmonize in restful mode of sleepiness as my mind drifted off to somewhere... or nowhere. At the end of the day: no miracles performed, no dead people raised, did not feed five thousand and no church was started. Nothing unusual happened; it was *just* another ordinary 'unspiritual' day in my life. Since there are so many streams in Christianity I used to get quite confused about what it means to be spiritual. Specifically, differentiating between what is hip, superficial and virtual, rather than what is central, essential and authentic. Discernment between these two concepts can be quite a challenge.

On my journey to grasp my life focus and interpret the true meaning of spirituality I began looking at the very real interactions Jesus had with individuals. After all, he spent most of his time in conversations with people, either one on one, or in small groups, such as the twelve. All the other things he did, the miracles, the supernatural manifestations, are of course important and essential. But they are not the concern of this article. That would require another important piece of brainstorming.

I first want to state where I think Jesus got his understanding and experience of spirituality from - the trinity! To understand how Jesus thought and understood life, we

need to understand the nature of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus understood life and spirituality in a purely relational manner. The trinity is relationship. They communicate, they listen, they understand, they love, they trust and so on. And since they are distinct persons, it was all personal, not focused on just one of them, one being independent or more important than the others. They are one. This is primary and foundational to how Jesus thought and felt, and therefore, resulted in the kinds of conversations and actions we read about.

...love means to relate well, to be others centered...

Consequently, we must understand "our ministry," "our work," and "our life" in that same manner; relationally. Our spirituality is not pragmatic, nor random, nor methodical. It is always deeply and PERSONALLY relational.

The other interesting aspect of Jesus' life was the environments where his individual encounters and group gatherings took place: they were often very private settings - in a home or some isolated location. His encounters often took place over a meal or on a walk. Environment seemed to have been important to Jesus. He often met people where they were at rather than the other way around. Or, he

let people intrude, and made them feel welcome. They all had his complete undivided attention!

When we read about the encounter with Nicodemus we find all of these aspects and more. Alone together at night, a theological discussion unfolds (must be born again). We find Nicodemus to be sincere, engaging, and hungry - a seeker. And Jesus responds to him kindly, ... gently. He does not go for the "big sales close" or the evangelical "slam dunk." I would have expected more push for a decision based on how some people have taught evangelization. There is no sinner's prayer or four-steps. He just lets the guy go! It is left open-ended without any recorded follow-up program administered by Jesus. However, it strikes me that Jesus would have complete trust in his Trinity Partners to continue the work (something I see lacking in the church today). I suspect Nicodemus would have felt comfortable to come back again and talk some more. He felt heard, respected, understood and valued.

Later we find Jesus encountering a woman at a well. Jesus starts here with his own thirst and lets her serve him. He already knew about her background, but does not confront her with it. He does the

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Family Profile

Zannah Downs



Travel seems to be in my blood. My great-grandfather William Charles Bird was a missionary who moved with his wife and young son to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the early 1900s. I remember my granny's tales of tigers and porcupines in that faraway land as I was growing up. She read me bible stories - she loved to tell me the story of David and Jonathan and what good friends they were. Friendship, such as that demonstrated by Jonathan and David, would become a crucial part of my life. God has used the blessings of friendships to show me that He is enough. **But it was not easy.**

I grew up a churchgoer. One Sunday our pastor asked the congregation to vote for the greatest: faith, hope or love? Two chose hope, one chose faith, the rest chose love. I was the little person (aged 10) who voted for faith. Time has changed my vote. Love is undoubtedly the greatest of all human qualities and it is an attitude of God himself (1 John 4:8). Love involves unselfish service to others; to show it gives evidence that you care. *Faith* is the foundation and content of God's message; *hope* is the attitude and focus, *love* is the action. When faith and hope are in line, you can love completely because you understand how God works. "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Love disappeared from my life the day my mother died. I was 15, my brother was 13. With an absent father and an elderly grandmother we lived alone from that age

onwards. It was a difficult time. I adored my mother; we had had a close and deep bond. I never thought I would come to terms with her loss nor find any good from the situation. For many years I didn't want to accept that my mum's death was anything other than "horrific" and "unfair" (it was a gruesome death from lung cancer where for the last five weeks she was struggling for each and every breath). What good could come from being abandoned as an infant by my father and brushed aside by him as an inconvenience after mum's death?

I thought that the love of my mother was the only important thing in life and without her life was pointless - of that I was convinced. We were not part of a church community at this point as we had stopped going to church when we became teenagers. We preferred to spend our Sundays watching television. With my grandmother's death shortly after my mother's, my family shrank to two members - my brother and me. I seem to remember anger being a principal emotion at the time!

While I lacked family God gave me good friends, amazing friends in fact. I was a difficult person for my brother to live with as I struggled to deal with our loss. I was angry, bitter and full of hatred for my father who had abandoned us.

But I met a wonderful woman when I started university. Her name was Hannah and she was a Christian. She used to sit with me and just hold my hand and pray with me. She approached me with love and gentleness. In our third year at university we lived together - and I was still a difficult character! Like

David's friend Jonathan, Hannah realized that the source of truth is God, who demands our ultimate loyalty. It was Hannah's relationship with God that gave her the ability to deal effectively with the complicated situation she found herself in as a friend to me - a very angry person. In time the Holy Spirit working through Hannah and in me changed my heart. I contacted my father and showed him the love that I had been shown. I continue to do so. God can melt and radically transform any heart.

Praise the Lord because He is good and His love endures forever. It's easy to say, it's easy to write. But it's not easy to live and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work to show you and me that truth.

It has been, it is, and it will be a long and challenging journey - every Christian life is. David's love for Jonathan was so very dear to him. "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (2 Samuel 1:26). God will always find a way to bring you back to Him. For me it was by using my friends. Thank God today for our friends. I am looking forward to building friendships in this community. ■



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politically incorrect things, breaking cultural divides and codes. He loves her, respects her, knows her shame and struggles and relates with such compassion and skill. Again, he listens, he hears her heart. He lets her lead the conversation. He took his time and was in no rush. He interweaves the word of knowledge about her past through a question. Gentle and respectful, he is not judging or condemning, nor condoning. It's striking that he does not tell her to be born again! It's what some would recommend. Matter of fact, he never said it to anyone else but Nicodemus (and we wonder why we are not understood when we say it to so many...). No threat of hell unless she repents. No great commission she must fulfill. However, she found life and her thirst was quenched. She goes and testifies to her town and they come to believe in Christ. I would have expected the person trained in religion to be more effective than this five-time divorcee.

There are many other encounters. None were duplicated. No conversation was repeated as if memorized. Each was unique. Each was authentic. Each matched the person and their situation. Their questions and pain were heard and they received a unique loving response.

Here I ask myself: what atmosphere do I create when I speak with an individual? How can I find out about their life, their struggles and pain, unless I ask them questions... unless I take time to listen? Jesus type communication requires that I don't prejudge them, and that I am approachable and real. It requires that I care deeply, but don't push towards my result. It's not about me, it's about them and God at work with them. Do I create an atmosphere where life can truly be experienced? Or, create an atmosphere where once the conversation is over, they would be

glad to meet again? Do they feel heard, respected and valued? It's challenging to be so unrehearsed and responsive. Memorized speeches won't cut it. A truly transformational conversation requires trusting God is always at work, even if there is no obvious result. He loves far more than I do and desires relationship with everyone.

I feel very challenged studying the encounters of Jesus. However, he said greater works than these we shall do (Jn. 14:12). I always thought of the context of this verse as performing miracles. In fact, the context is the Trinity and the greater works Jesus refers to are simply "the Father doing his work through him." Maybe it was a greater miracle for Nicodemus to follow Jesus after a conversation with him than to feed five thousand. Maybe it was a greater miracle for the woman at the well to testify that the Christ has come after one conversation with him than to raise Lazarus from the dead. The supernatural was not the main emphasis in Jesus' life. Rather, it was showing us how to live, how to relate, how to build deep relationships, and how to be human. **He showed that being spiritual means to love, all within the confines of our human interactions and in our earthly,**

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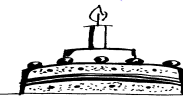
PCF Finances	
October 2009	
eBanka Account No. 181730394/5500	
+44,449	Total Income
3,050	Internet & Comm.
10,180	Office Rent & Electricity
8,500	Church Rent
10,352	Supplies & Equipment
300	Copying & Publishing
39,128	Salaries/Employ Taxes
7,246	Evangelism & Teaching
3,000	Church Giving
1,262	Fees & Advertising
450	Miscellaneous
83,468	Total Expenses
-39,019	Net Income

All amounts shown are in Czech Crowns.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- 1) **Church Finances** – provision to cover our expenses and wisdom in spending and giving.
- 2) **Provision for current and former PCF members so they can stay involved with full-time ministry** such as John & Kelsie Mullen, Doris Rabus, Rosane da Silva, David Snell, Kelly Kuest, Sam Ewell, Michael Stadler, Will Porter, Andy Faust and Roger & Robin Harsh for God's total provision and protection in their lives. **"Always keep on praying for all the saints." (Eph. 16:18)**
- 3) **Church staff** – Please pray that God would call some worship leaders to come help with PCF, CISP and IHOPP.
- 4) **Outreaches**– please pray for God's leading and for homeless outreaches.
- 5) **Mullen's reconstruction of their attic**- Pray for finances, good bids and quality work to complete the project.



Upcoming Birthdays

The following PCF members past and present will be having birthdays this month.

Jana Deršatová	December 1
Judith Old	December 2
Barbara Denková	December 2
Tasci Gibson	December 3
Justin Kruizenga	December 3
Matthew Ables	December 4
Brian Sedwick	December 6
Laura Herrmann	December 8
Ted Whang	December 8
Emma Gower	December 10
Jon La Plante	December 12
Joanne Scott Rudland	December 15
Zora Kounovská	December 17
Andy Herrmann	December 20
Oleg Pimenov	December 21
Amy Jordan	December 22
Lída Rychnovská - Šubrtová	December 26
Samuel Gawlik	December 27
Martina Miššířková	December 27
Stephen Cheong	December 29
Joan Rigby	December 29
Šimon Drápal	December 31



PCF Bank Info:

Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF,
eBanka Account No. 181730394/5500
Contact Evzen Pekarek for assistance
at PekarekEvzen@seznam.cz

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physical world.

Jesus demonstrated for us that living spiritually includes our most normal interactions, gatherings, meals, walks, cook-outs, BBQs (he even cooked breakfast for his disciples after being raised from the dead – fully enjoying the human experience of life), and then some. But it requires that we think relationally as the Trinity does, and that we live intentionally in every encounter. We must learn to listen, ask, speak, and share. Allow God to sanctify the common! Trust him to continue the process. Just do your part, being to the other person truly present, real and honest; fully tuned in, and unconditionally loving.

Jesus came not just to get us to heaven, but to save and transform us to live life on earth –as humans. Francis Schaeffer is supposed to have said something to this effect: “Jesus did not come to make me a Christian

first, but to make me human.” God’s main strategy is us. We are meant to be fully human and Jesus came to redefine what human looked like – to redefine love. And, love means to relate well, to be others centered, and to serve others in their need and situation. Love makes the questions, pains and struggles of others my agenda.

We must focus on transformation of heart, mind, soul and spirit, and being as authentic and real as Jesus demonstrated. Focusing on behavior or right religious beliefs is more likely to leave us as enemies of Christ (Pharisees), rather than ambassadors of Christ.

John says: that the word became flesh and dwelt among us. You could hear, see, feel, and touch Jesus. It was God’s main strategy - Jesus becoming human. And you and I now are called to live fully human. It’s God’s strategy to reach

the world. Authentically, lovingly reaching out, being present, allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us in transformational conversations and encounters, trusting that the Holy Spirit will continue the work. He is always at work (before and after the encounter).

Let’s let go of our ineffective methods, our one-fits-all approaches, let’s dump our crutches and start walking the adventure, intentionally engaging, fully present in each moment, communicating well, loving and serving others, and entrusting the results to the One in charge. We’re created to be and live as humans. It’s the road to “success,” a life that brings immense joy, contentment and fulfillment. After all, the Greatest Commandment was to love God with all we are and have, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. ■

John Mullen, PCF Pastor

PCF Christmas Program



On December 13th we will enjoy our annual Christmas service. This is the time a year that we intentionally create a Czech language service (with English translation). Many Czechs have never attended a Christian worship service, and Christmas is a great opportunity to invite them to meet us and to meet the Christ whose birth they culturally observe every year.

This year we have a worship team from KS-Střed (Christian Fellowship-City Center) community heading up the carols



and worship. The pastor, Mirek Hoblík, will be inviting all our guests to attend their Christmas service the following week.

One of the kindest acts we can do for our friends, colleagues and neighbors is to help break down the barriers that have separated them from the Christian historical roots of their nation. Let’s pray that God touches hearts this Christmas season. ■

Should you have a testimony to share please email us. The deadline is December 20, 2009.